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# Green Facts

## Environmental Approvals in Ontario

The Ministry of the Environment approvals program has been designed to ensure that all undertakings requiring approval are carried out in accordance with legislation including the *Ontario Water Resources Act* (OWRA), the *Environmental Protection Act* (EPA), the *Pesticides Act* (PA), the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EAA), the *Environmental Bill of Rights* (EBR), the *Safe Drinking Water Act* (SDWA) and associated regulations. Certificates of Approval are required for facilities that release emissions to the atmosphere, discharge contaminants to ground and surface water, provide potable water supplies, or store, transport, process or dispose of waste.

### Who Reviews My Application?

The Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch (EAAB) provides "one-window" service for regulatory environmental approvals in Ontario. The branch is committed to effective environmental protection, excellent customer service and efficient ways of doing business in the delivery of these approvals programs. The EAAB includes customer service, program development, engineering and specialized technical expertise in application review. Within the branch dedicated staff are available to answer enquiries regarding approval and assessment issues from the public and the regulated community.

Advice and technical guidance on the requirements for specific applications is also available.

### What are Certificates of Approval?

Certificates of Approval are documents prepared by Ministry staff that permit various activities to proceed in compliance with the legislation. They are developed and issued with many purposes in mind. They must address the site specific considerations relevant to the proposal, provide enforceable requirements that ensure protection of human health and the natural environment, comply with legislation and policy guidelines, and acknowledge issues that fall within the mandate of the Ministry. Certificates of Approval are used by Abatement, Approvals and Enforcement staff in the course of their daily activities, as well as by the public and the proponent.

All submitted applications are reviewed to ensure completeness and are then forwarded to specialized technical staff who ensure the proposal will meet Ontario's environmental protection standards. Part of the evaluation process includes an opportunity for public participation in the decision making process. The *Environmental Bill of Rights* sets out rules for different types of applications and explains how Ontario residents may provide comments on the proposal. If the proposal meets the Ministry's

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standards and the public's environmental concerns are addressed appropriately, the evaluation process results in an approval, permit, licence or environmental assessment decision. Applicants will receive a legally binding instrument at this stage, which generally includes specific requirements to ensure that the ongoing operations from the proposal will not result in harmful impacts to human health or the natural environment.

**Certificates of Approval are required for (but not limited to) the following activities:**

**Air (EPA s.9)**

- Construction, alteration, extension or replacement of any plant, structure, equipment, apparatus, mechanism or thing that may discharge or from which may be discharged a contaminant (including noise) into any part of the natural environment other than water;
- Alteration of a process or rate of production with the result that a contaminant may be discharged into any part of the natural environment other than water or the rate or manner of discharge of a contaminant into any part of the natural environment other than water may be altered.

**Waste (EPA s.27)**

- Using, operating, establishing, altering, enlarging or extending a waste management system or a waste disposal site.

**Sewage Works (OWRA s. 53)**

- Establishment, alteration, extension or replacement of new or existing sewage works (including industrial waste water facilities)

**Drinking Water Systems (SDWA)**

- Establishment, alteration, extension or replacement of new or existing municipal drinking water systems

**Where can I get more information?**

Guides for applying for various types of approvals, along with application forms, are available at all Ministry of the Environment offices. These guides are comprehensive documents which provide proponents with virtually everything they need to know in preparation of a complete application. The guides have been written in a very accessible style to ensure that proponents are able to understand clearly the work they need to do in preparing an application. These guides are updated regularly to reflect changes in the Ministry's business of issuing approvals. The guides for applying, application forms, Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) guidelines, and guides for application fees are available in packages for delivery through the mail, or for pick up from the Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch. For more information about Certificates of Approval or to obtain an application package, please contact the Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch locally at 416-314-8001 or toll free at 1-800-461-6290. Application information is also available on the Ministry of the Environment Internet site at [www.ene.gov.on.ca](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca).

**Applications for Certificates of Approval should be submitted to:**

Director  
Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch  
Ministry of the Environment  
2 St. Clair Ave W, Floor 12A  
Toronto, ON M4V 1L5

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*The information contained in this Fact Sheet is of a general nature only and is not intended to constitute advice for any specific situation. Please note that the text of many Ontario statutes and regulations are available on the Internet at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).*



